



■ AHHS School-Based Program  
Bayside Health Center  
Bridgeport Community Health Center  
David R. Gamez Community Health Center  
HDI Ob/Gyn and Midwifery Services, Bay City  
Imlay City Migrant Health Center  
Janes Street Academic Community Health Center  
Old Town Saginaw Community Health Center  
Roosevelt S. Ruffin Community Health Center  
SHS School-Based Program  
Shiawassee Community Health Center  
The Hearth Home  
Thumb Area Community Health Center  
Wadsworth Dental Center

■ Brenda Coughlin, M.D., MPH  
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**TO:** SENATOR MIKE SHIRKEY, CHAIR OF SENATE HEALTH POLICY COMMITTEE  
**FROM:** BRENDA COUGHLIN, MD, MPH, FAAFP  
**SUBJECT:** SUPPORT FOR SENATE BILL 1013  
**DATE:** SEPTEMBER 20, 2016  
**CC:** MEMBERS OF THE HEALTH POLICY COMMITTEE

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Chairman Shirkey,

I write you today to express our support for Senate Bill 1013, legislation to introduce dental therapists in Michigan.

On September 6, 2016, Dr. Paul Crowley, Great Lakes Bay Health Centers' Chief Dental Officer, and I had the opportunity to testify before the Senate Health Policy Committee about issues surrounding access to oral health care in Michigan. We thank you for the opportunity to discuss such an important aspect of overall health and are encouraged by the Committee's attention to issues many members of our communities face daily. To recap the issues highlighted in our testimony:

- Great Lakes Bay Health Centers (GLBHC), formerly known as "Health Delivery, Inc.," provides comprehensive primary and preventive care, behavioral health, and dental services to over 46,000 individuals from 15 counties at 26 sites throughout mid-Michigan in both urban and rural settings.
- GLBHC accepts all types of insurance – private, Medicare, and Medicaid – as well as provides care to those that remain uninsured for various reasons.
- In 2015, GLBHC provided more than 31,000 dental encounters to nearly 15,000 patients, the overwhelming majority of those patients being on Medicaid.
- Virtually every county we serve (13 of 15 counties) is federally designated as a Health Professional Shortage Area for dental care. In many of these counties, GLBHC is the only Medicaid provider for dental services.
- GLBHC employs 11 dentists provides comprehensive dental services including, fillings, cleanings, crown and bridge, dentures, root canals, extractions, and other surgeries.
- GLBHC is actively recruiting 4 additional dentists to increase access to dental care, especially necessary restorative care, but recruitment is a constant challenge.

- When we opened a dental clinic in Bad Axe, MI, more than a year ago, we received more than 1,000 phone calls a day seeking dental care. Although we have been able to meet the needs for many in the community, we continue to be inundated daily with phone calls with individuals seeking dental services.
- At our dental clinic in Saginaw, MI, our phone lines crashed daily due to the volume of calls seeking dental care until we were forced to restrict the number of phone lines available to five.

At Great Lakes Bay Health Centers, we believe that it is time for Michigan to look at all options available to address the access to oral health care issue and Senate Bill 1013 is a critical step to improve access to dental care and create a true dental home for hundreds of thousands of Michiganders. We believe a team of providers – including dental therapists – all working at the top of their scope and education is how we can increase access to deliver general dental care to the majority our patients, allowing dentists more time to care for the most complex patients.

Dental therapists have been utilized in more than 50 other countries for nearly 100 years, and more recently, have helped improve access to dental care in Minnesota – the first state government to authorize the licensing of dental therapists in 2009. In 2015, the Commission on Dental Accreditation approved curriculum for dental therapy, signaling that proper assurances for patient quality and safety have already been demonstrated.

Dental therapy should not be considered experimental; it is an evidence-based model to improve access to dental care. It is time we give dental practices in Michigan as many tools as possible to meet the needs of our communities, including dental therapists. Great Lakes Bay Health Centers strongly supports Senate Bill 1013.

Sincerely,



Brenda Coughlin, MD, MPH, FAAFP  
President and Chief Executive Officer  
Great Lakes Bay Health Centers